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DEPT FOR EUR/WE LARREA; NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/13/2016

TAGS: LE SOCI PREL VT

SUBJECT: LEBANON: VATICAN FOCUSED, ENVOY NOT YET NAMED

REF: A. A) EMBASSY VATICAN - LARREA TELCONS

B. B) EMBASSY VATICAN - LARREA EMAILS

CLASSIFIED BY: Peter Martin, Pol/Econ Chief, Vatican, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) As discussed (ref a), the Holy See should shortly name a special envoy to Lebanon, most likely former Secretary for Relations with States and experienced Lebanon hand Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran. Meanwhile, Department calls to Papal Nuncio Sambi in Washington and current Secretary for Relations with States Mamberti in Vatican City have reinforced Post's lobbying -- paying off in increased attention to the situation here. A prominent cardinal who has been monitoring the situation told us that Mamberti is now very much "focused on the issue" and had appreciated the call from A/S Welch (ref b). In addition to the plans to name an envoy (something the Lebanese ambassador here told us he has also been pushing), the Holy See's public voice has become louder on the issue. Pope Benedict XVI called on the people and political leaders of Lebanon December 10 to "build a nation of dialogue and conviviality and to come together for the common good". The pope went on to say that he is following "with deep preoccupation" the events unfolding throughout the Middle East. The Vatican's daily newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, quoted the pontiff in a banner headline on its Monday-Tuesday edition: "Identify immediate and peaceful solutions and the justice necessary for Lebanon and the entire Middle East."

¶2. (C) Comment: The Holy See is divided internally on how aggressive to be on Lebanon, including its approach to Syria, whose ambassador presents his credentials to the pope December ¶14. A senior Vatican official told Ambassador Rooney that some within the Vatican MFA favored a harder line on Syria, making it clear that its actions in the area are destabilizing, while others were calling for a softer approach. The pope and MFA officials host Israeli PM Olmert December 13.

ROONEY